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The Babylonian Name of Palestine

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IN the Babylonian bilingual lists of countries there occur four equations,¹ the second member of which, in each case, reads, ^{mat} *A-mur-ri-e*, a phrase variously rendered as "western land," "land of the Amorites," "land of the Canaanites," "Syria," "Phoenicia," and "Palestine."

The first equation reads as follows:

$$kur\ mar-tu-ki = {}^{mat} a-mur-ri-e.$$

Here *mar-tu* contains the idea of "sunset," while *tu* is a common ideogram for *erêbu* "enter,"² which, either with or without *šamši*,³ means "the setting sun." The element *mar* usually equals *šakânu* "make."⁴ It seems, however, in this connection, to have an abstract force, like *ša* (= *gar*).⁵ *Mar-tu* therefore = "setting" and is a natural term for "western land." *Kur mar-tu* then means "land of the setting sun," an expression which is much used in the writings of the Babylonians and Assyrians to designate "the western land" which they called in their Semitic speech ^{mat} *Amurrê*.

The second equation reads:

$$kur\ ti-id-nu-um-ki = {}^{mat} a-mur-ri-e.$$

The Sumerian side of this equation is certainly not ideographic, but purely syllabic. *Tidnu* (= Gudea Statue B vi 13: ⁶ *ti-da-num* "Palestine") is an Egyptian name, for we know that the Egyptians called the highlands of Syria *Tinu*,⁷ which became

¹ II R 50 iii/iv 57-59 and II R 48 12.

² Br. 1072.

³ II R 39 15 e.

⁴ Br. 5820.

⁵ Prince, *Materials*, s. v. *gar*, and p. XVII.

⁶ *Découv. en Chaldée*, Vol. 2 p. x.

⁷ W. Max Müller, *Asien u. Europa*, 145.

in Semitic speech *Tidnu*;⁸ *i. e.*, *tinu* equals *tinnu* and then *tidnu*.⁹ Hence its appearance in our equation.

The third equation reads:

$$kur\ gir-gir = {}^{mat}a-mur-ri-e.$$

According to Sb73,¹⁰ the combination *gir-gir* has the value *tidnu*, the same as in the second equation. We know that *gir* is an ideogram for the human foot, which was considered a symbol of power. Note that *gir-gir* = *gašāru* "be strong."¹¹ Why the Babylonians took this double sign as a representation of the land of the west called *Tidnu* can only be conjectured. There must have been something about the land represented that suggested the use of this double symbol, which occurs, however, so far as I know, only in syllabaries and lists of countries. It might possibly refer to the mountainous character of Palestine; *i. e.*, a mountainous land = a strong land = *gir-gir*.

The fourth equation reads:

$$(ti-id-nu)\ gir-gir = a-mur-ru-u.$$

This is really an explanation of the chief factors of the preceding equation, namely, that *gir-gir*, called *tidnu*, equals *amurrû*. It is only incidental that the second *gir* is written with the upper and lower wedges coming to an angle. According to Brünnow,¹² the two ends of the second *gir* are reversed, so that the two *girs* stand, not as one foot following another, but as two feet, the toes of the one facing the toes of the other. The second *gir*, in my opinion, is simply by accident defectively written.

We come now to the second member of the four equations, viz., *mat a-mur-ri-e*. The second syllable of the word, happening to have the value *har* as well as *mur*, *amurrê* was at first read *aḥarrê*, as if related to the Hebrew אֲחֵרִי. Readings from the Old Testament like הַיָּם הַמִּזְרָחִי "the western sea," seemed to justify this first conclusion.¹³ The form *aḥarrê*, however, has been proved to be incorrect, as the following collocation will show. A study of the El-Amarna tablets, where the word is found written in three ways, *a-mu-ri*, *a-mu-ur-ra*, and *a-mur-ri*,

⁸ ZA, 10 54.

⁹ Erman, *Egypt. Gr.*, 19.

¹⁰ AL³ 54.

¹¹ HWB 206.

¹² Br. 9220 and 9221.

¹³ Deut. 11 24 and 34 2.

forces us to the decision that the pronunciation was always *amurrê*. An instance of the spelling *a-mu-ri* occurs in tablet 21 of the El-Amarna tablets of the British Museum, while *a-mu-ur-ri* may be found in Old Babylonian contracts,¹⁴ as well as in the El-Amarna tablets. Hommel considered the word identical with the Old Testament אֲמֹרִי,¹⁵ and even derived *mar-tu* from the unused fem. אֲמֹרֶת, a doubtful theory. The Aramaic form of the word, an example of which Professor Prince gives from the business dockets of Darius II.,¹⁶ is also seen in a passage from the Talmud,¹⁷ where the transcription of the Babylonian word appears as אֲוֹרִיָא, which must be pronounced *awurriya*. In New Babylonian *m = w*, which is another proof that the word is *amurrê*, (*m = ı*).

Amurrê is no doubt the same as the *amor* of the Egyptians, whose use of the word throws some light on the antiquity of the people and the location of their territory. Egyptian records tell us that a Pharaoh of the nineteenth dynasty "plundered the land of *Kadeš* and the land of *A-ma-r*," and also mention the "river of the land of *A-ma(u-ra)*," namely the Orontes. They speak also of the "precious timber" of the "*A-mau-ira*" which was cut, evidently referring to the cedars of Lebanon.¹⁸ The *Amor* of the Egyptians is no doubt, the same as the *Amurrê* of the Babylonians and apparently reached to Kadesh, situated on the banks of the Orontes, mentioned in the account of the deeds of Rameses II. See the portrait on the walls of the Ramessêum at Thebes.

The Scriptures give quite a clear presentation of the location of the Amorites, whom the Hebrews dispossessed. While there may be a doubt as to whether the word כָּנַע is from כָּנַע "bow down" (hence "low") and Amorite from אֲמֹר "high," yet these ideas "low" and "high" seem to appear in the early uses of the two words: "the Canaanite dwelt by the sea and the Amorite in the hill country."¹⁹ In the period of the Exodus,

¹⁴ Meissner, *Beit. z. altbab. Privatrecht*, 42.

¹⁵ *PSBA*, XVIII 18.

¹⁶ Prince, *Materials*, 233.

¹⁷ Delitzsch, *Assyrische Studien*, 139.

¹⁸ *Asien u. Europa*, 217, 218 and 228.

¹⁹ Num. 13 29.

Moses contended with the two kings of the Amorites on the east of the Jordan, and Joshua with the twelve Amorite kings on the west. In later times, we find the land of the Amorites referred to by both the Elohist and the Yahwistic writers as the country to be occupied by the Hebrews, namely, the whole of Palestine, both on the east and the west of the Jordan. This goes a long way towards explaining the generic use of *Amurrê* in Assyro-Babylonian to denote the whole of the westland.

We find *Amurrê*, or its equivalent *Martu*, mentioned very early in the Babylonian inscriptions, and often by the Assyrians. Sargon, king of Akkad, is believed to have gone at least as far as the Lebanon. The Omen tablets relate that Sargon went into *Martu* and smote the land and became the conqueror of the four regions.²⁰ Besides numerous sentences in the Omens descriptive of this king's journeys in the west, Thureau-Dangin gives a little tablet according to which "Sargon subdued the Amorite (*mar-tu-am*)."²¹ Gudea, patesi of Lagash, also visited the land of the Amorites: "from Kasalla,²² a land of the Amorites (*mar-tu*) great blocks of stone he brought out, and made a statue which he erected in the court of E-nana. From Tidanu, a land of the Amorites, marble in pieces he brought."²³ Nebuchadnezzar I., in mentioning his conquests, says that "he conquered the land of the *Amurrê*."²⁴ When we come to the Assyrian kings, particularly Sargon II.²⁵ and Ašur-

²⁰ XXX *ûme Šarru-ukin ša a-na mat Mar-tu-ki illi-ku-ma mat Mar-tu i-ni-ru kibrat irbiti kat-su ikšu-ud*; IV R 34 obv. 5 and 6.

²¹ *šanat Šar-ga-ni-šar-alim Amurra(mar-tu)-am in ba-sa-ar ikšud. Réc. de tablettes chald.*, 85 and 124 (pl. 57) rev. col. i.

²² *Kasalla*, elsewhere *Ka-šal(NI)-la* IV R 34 obv. 31, and *Ka-šal(NI)-lu-ki* IV R Obv. 22, is evidently a country and is probably a narrower term than *Mar-tu*.

²³ *Ka-sal-la har-sag Mar-tu-ta dag-na gal im-ta-è na-rù-a-šú mu-dim kaskal è-nana-ka mu-na-ni-du. Ti-da-num har-sag Mar-tu-ta šir-gal lagab-bi-a mi-ni-tum. Découv. en Chaldée*, Vol. 2 p. x.

²⁴ *Ša dan-na mat Lu-lu-bi-i u-šam-ki-tu i-na kakkê ka-šid mat A-mur-ri-e ša-li-lu kaš-ši-i*; Nebuchadnezzar, Inscript. V R 55 9-10.

²⁵ *iš-tu mat Ra-a-ši mi-sir mat E-lam-ti amel Pu-ku-du amel Da-mu-nu Dûr-ku-ri-gal-zi ra-pi-ku mad-bar kali-šu a-di na-ḫal mat Mu-us-ri mat A-mur-ri-e rapaš-tum mat Ḫat-ti a-na si-ḫir-ti-ša i-be-lu*; Sargon, Cylinder.

banipal,²⁶ we find numerous references to the *Amurrê*. The Old-Babylonian kings and the writers of the El-Amarna letters had applied the term to the territory that the Egyptians called *Amor*, that is, to Northern Palestine, which begins at the banks of the Orontes as one approaches from the east. The Assyrians, however, because they found the northern limit had been crowded to the south by the pressure of the Hittites, with whom they had almost always to deal in their western incursions, made the term cover Southern Palestine which, of course, included Israel and Judah. It seems probable then that the Amorites were of sufficient importance to impress their nationality upon the Assyro-Babylonian writers who therefore used the tribal name *Amurrê* as a designation of the whole of Palestine.

I R 36 12-13. *Iš-tu mat Ia-at-na-na ša kabal tam-tin ša-lam šam-ši a-di pa-aṭ mat Mu-šu-ri u mat Mu-us-ki mat Amurrê rapaš-tum mat Hat-ti a-na si-ḫir-ti-ša nap-ḫa-ar Gu-ti-um mat Ma-da-ai ru-ḫu-u-ti*; Sargon, General Inscript., lines 16-17. *Journ. Asiat.* 1863.

²⁶ *U šu-u m Am-mu-la-di šar mat Ki-id-ri it-ba-am-ma a-na mit-ḫu-uš-ši šarrāni mat Amurrê ša il Ašur il Ištar u ilāni rabūti u-šad-gi-lu pa-nu-u-a*; Ašurbanipal, Rassam Prism, V R 8 15-18.